

2 SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED WEEKLY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Ocean Telegraph Cables and Telegraph Monopolies.

From the N. Y. Herald.

The subterfuges, false pretenses, and scheming of the telegraph monopolists, and of those members of Congress who are their tools, to favor and protect existing monopolies are astounding. We talk of Treasury rings, railroad rings, and other rings, but this telegraph monopoly ring beats them all in cunning management and in contempt for public opinion or the public welfare. Its power, too, seems to be equal to its impudence, for it has got a firm grip on the Senate of the United States, and its chief advocate is Mr. Sumner, of Massachusetts. Under the pretext of legislating to facilitate ocean telegraph enterprises, measures are insidiously introduced to prevent that, to defeat projects already inaugurated and ready to be carried out, and to perpetuate the existing monopoly. That was the whole scope and intent of the resolutions offered some time ago declaring that no cable should be landed on the shores of the United States without the consent of Congress, and that the Newfoundland company in particular should have permission to land a cable; and if it is the same now under similar propositions to authorize the London and Newfoundland and the American and Atlantic Telegraph Companies to land cables. It is all a trick of the British monopolists and those Americans who have sold themselves to the British telegraph line and British interests. The object is to prevent the French cable being laid, or any other. The monopolists pretend to facilitate telegraphic communication when companies start a project, but as soon as a company like the Franco-American goes earnestly to work, manufacturers of cable and puts it on hand ready to be laid, these monopolists and their agents in Congress throw every obstacle possible in the way. The conduct of the members of Congress who are thus working against their own country, the welfare of the American people, and the progress of the age is simply infamous.

Why should not telegraph cables be laid anywhere on our shores? Why should not any company, American, French, German, Spanish, or English, land a cable wherever it chooses, from Maine to Florida? Yes, one, two, five, or twenty, if companies have the means and enterprises. The more cables the better. By the largest competition the people, the press, and the Government would have telegraphic communication cheapened, and the dangerous monopoly which is now confined to British territory, and which can be used in the interests of a ring of speculators to influence the markets, would be destroyed. It would be just as reasonable for Congress to say what foreign newspapers or books should be landed in the United States as what telegraphs shall. It would be no more narrow-minded, illiberal, or absurd to limit emigration or trade than to limit the transmission of ideas or the means of communicating them. One would think from the course of Mr. Sumner and those who are acting with him that we have gone back to the dark ages, when blind rulers and bigoted priests shut out the light of intelligence. If any one thinks we are too severe in these remarks, we call attention to the fact that when Mr. Stockton offered an amendment in the Senate to one of the telegraph cable resolutions to which we referred, permitting any and all companies to land their cables on the same terms as those proposed to be given to the London and Newfoundland Company, the amendment was bitterly opposed by the Sumner ring. Yet could anything be more fair and reasonable or more for the interests of the public than Mr. Stockton's broad and liberal proposition?

There is not an ocean telegraph enterprise started in this country that does not meet with hostility from the British cable company and its allies. Among its allies, too, we regret to say, are Americans. The opposition is not only open, but is made generally in disguise, and under the pretext of being favorable. The existing Atlantic Cable Company is British throughout, and looks only to British interests. Its object is to make the most gigantic monopoly ever known, embracing telegraph companies and lines to operate from the eastern shore of America to Great Britain, and from thence across Europe, the Mediterranean, Egypt, or Persia, to India and China. It is earnestly at work now on this stupendous project, and with the aid, too, of some Americans. It is secretly hostile to the Pacific and Asiatic telegraph project now before Congress, and to the East India Telegraph Company, which is entirely American, and which proposes to lay cables along the coast of China, and to connect that empire with the western shores of this continent by means of cables across the Pacific. It is using its enormous capital and influence to prevent American telegraph communication to Asia by way of the Pacific, and to turn all the advantages of this great agent of civilization and commerce in the other direction, by way of India and across the continent of Asia and Europe.

British capitalists and statesmen are far-seeing, and they know that in the future the telegraph will do more than fleets or treaties in giving direction to and controlling the commerce of the world. They fear the rivalry of America and the advantages it possesses with regard to China and other parts of Asia from geographical position. Hence the efforts to centre all communication from America on British soil, and to keep this country as much isolated as possible from China and Asia, as far as the telegraph is concerned. They will, if possible, prevent New York and San Francisco from becoming the centres of commerce of the world, and will do everything to hold London as the centre. Our short-sighted statesmen, or rather we should say our stupid Congressmen, are playing into the hands of the British and helping them to carry out their vast projects by favoring the Atlantic cable monopoly, and by throwing cold water on the enterprises of other foreigners and those of our own citizens. In the name of common sense, and for the interests of our own country, let us have no more narrow-minded action about this ocean telegraph business, but let the liberal proposition of Mr. Stockton, to permit any and all companies to land cables on the shores of the United States, be adopted at once.

The Irish Church Bill and the Tory Opposition.

From the N. Y. Times.

Mr. Gladstone's bill for the disestablishment of the Irish Church came up for a second reading on Thursday night, and in accordance with the customary procedure of the House of Commons, the Opposition intended to propose a narrow motion to delay the consideration of the bill. Mr. Disraeli, however, to the usual custom in such cases, moved an amendment to the bill, and moved as an amendment that the bill "be read a second time that day six months," that being the Parliamentary form commonly made use of in order to prevent the passage of a measure before the House.

As Parliament will not be sitting on "that day six months," the success of the amendment would be equivalent to the rejection of the measure. Generally speaking, a motion of this nature is placed in the hands of a member of the second rank, in order that the leader of the party may hold himself in reserve for a critical point in the debate. But in this case Mr. Disraeli himself, having regard to the importance of the question under consideration, which he agreed with Mr. Gladstone, was one of the most gigantic ever brought before the House, moved the amendment. The debate will certainly last a week, but it is said that there is a tacit understanding to the effect that a division shall be taken before the Easter holidays, so that Thursday next may be looked to as the day on which the fate of religious inequality in Ireland will probably be decided.

It is almost needless to say that there can be but little doubt as to the result. Mr. Gladstone possesses a majority of 115 in a House of 658, elected on an appeal to the country, made on the question of the Irish Church exclusively. The bill which he has introduced is the result of the consultations of a Cabinet which comprises representatives of every section of the Liberal party, and which has met with the hearty approval of every organ of the Liberal press. There can be no excuse for mutiny, or even for lukewarmness, in the Liberal ranks, and no professed Liberal who deserts his party in a question of such paramount importance can ever regain the confidence of his constituents. Under these circumstances, the result of the division is all but a foregone conclusion.

The tactics of the Tories appear to be simple enough. They fight, of course, with the courage of despair, and will probably divide with sullen obstinacy on every occasion available under the forms of the House. Their leaders still raise the cry of "contumacious," and hold the old Church and State standard, but really rally round it who are not personally or pecuniarily interested in the maintenance of the threatened establishment. They attempt to divert attention to the land question in Ireland, as more urgent in itself, and more likely to furnish an opportunity for giving proof to the Irish people of the determination of England to deal with her interests in a just and conciliatory spirit. But they are evidently fighting against hope, and the tone of Mr. Disraeli's speech itself shows that such is the case. There will be a week of brilliant oratory on both sides of the House, and the great measure of justice will be triumphantly carried.

The Cuban War of Independence.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

The war in Cuba continues with unabating fierceness. Engagements between the hostile forces are now of almost daily occurrence, and there is hardly one among them in which the Spaniards do not claim to have come off victors. But notwithstanding these numerous victories, and notwithstanding the frequent arrival of fresh troops from Spain, no progress—even according to Spanish accounts—is made in the suppression of the revolution. For some weeks the struggle has been particularly active in the jurisdictions of Sagua la Grande, Remedios, Villa Clara, Colon, and Trinidad. The Cuban forces in these districts are numerous, in two, Sagua la Grande and Remedios alone, the Spaniards estimate them at 7000 men. The Spaniards claim to have defeated them in several encounters, but are forced to admit that the Cubans have destroyed the railroad from Managua to Alvarez, and thus interrupted the whole railroad communication with the eastern part of the island. The Spaniards are unable to protect the Spanish plantations, and a number of the largest have been burned by the insurgents. The liberation of the slaves begins in good earnest. Wherever the Cubans reach a plantation, they set the negroes free and draft them into the army.

All this is ample proof that the revolution is certainly not losing ground. The Spaniards are determined to keep the Queen of the Antilles at all hazards, and continue to fill the gaps in the army by fresh troops, sent from Spain. The Cubans are sanguine of final success. They hope for large reinforcements of their armies from the neighboring American countries; and count on the coming hot season as their most effective ally.

The Tenure-of-Office Law.

From the N. Y. World.

The World is so carried away by its hatred of Grant that it actually wants Congress not to repeal the Tenure-of-Office law, and speaks of it as a wholesome and necessary safeguard. It is this to instruct the people in the principles of government? and does the World speak by authority, and as the organ of the Democratic party, defend this mischievous law?—Evening Post.

It is needless for the World to say to its own readers that the Post inexorably perverts what we said on this subject. The World, which opposed the Tenure-of-Office act in its first inception, denounced it on its passage, demonstrated its unconstitutionality when it was made the instrument of impeachment, and has consistently urged its immediate and total repeal, has not changed its opinion of the character of that law; but it is not our practice to discuss public questions in a narrow spirit, which seeks nothing in them beyond their bearing upon the transient politics of the hour. The evils which the Tenure-of-Office act pretends to guard against are too real, as they are of the gravest character.

Our objection to this law, besides its repugnance to the Constitution, is, that it is a sham remedy, which introduces greater mischief than it affects to cure. The manner in which the Federal patronage is used in a tendentious abuse which threatens the stability of our free institutions; and we are not willing that the present effort to repeal the Tenure-of-Office act should blind the country to the enormity and the dangerous tendency of those abuses. We will restate our views upon this subject, and we hope to do it with clearness enough to secure for them the favorable consideration even of the Post. We should be glad of its co-operation, and of the aid of all journals which aim to discuss public questions on their merits, in calling public attention to abuses which will destroy our institutions if they are not remedied.

We, of course, do not disguise our want of confidence in General Grant; but, in saying that he will use the Federal patronage to promote his re-election, after the Tenure-of-Office act is repealed, we imputed nothing to him which would not be equally practised by any other President in his place. It is notorious that, for the last quarter of a century, all Presidents, without distinction of party, and irrespective of their claims to public confidence, have sought to make the use of the patronage. The fault is not in any particular man, but in the system. The temptation is too strong for ordinary human virtue to resist, and it becomes constantly greater with the growth of the country, the multiplication of offices, and the facilities for profit and plunder consequent upon our colossal debt and exorbitant taxes. To turn this enormous mass of patronage loose to be scrambled for every four years by rapacious politicians is demoralizing political life in this country, and subjecting our institutions to constant, violent wrenchings which they can not long survive. When the Tenure-of-Office

act is repealed, General Grant will undoubtedly use the patronage of the Government to promote his chances of a reelection; and no man of such penetration, who is acquainted with political life in this country, can doubt that his wish to employ it for that purpose is the chief reason why he refuses the liberty which would be given him by a suspension of the law, and insists so stubbornly upon its repeal. Its suspension for eight or ten months would enable him to fill the public service with new men, his own appointees, and he could afterwards remove for cause all who were unfaithful or inefficient. But as the great mass of officers would be entirely independent of him, they would have no stronger motive to work for his re-nomination than for the nomination of any other member of their party. The Post, which cannot be blind to the ordinary practice, must admit that it is a gross abuse of the public offices to be thus used to promote any man's ambition, and we think too well of its good sense to suppose it expects the evil can be remedied by the election of Presidents whose virtue would be proof against the seductions of ambition.

We have no expectation that an adequate remedy can be found in any such measure as Mr. Jenckes' Civil Service bill, although that scheme is not without its merits, to which we have endeavored, at various times, to do full justice. Such a reform would merely lop off some of the branches of the evil, instead of laying the axe at the root of the tree.

We incline to think that the best remedies which have yet been devised were those adopted in the abortive Confederate Constitution. In points which did not touch upon the subjects in immediate controversy between the North and the South, the alterations made in the Federal Constitution by the Confederates were, in the main, wise and judicious, and were founded on the experience of the Southern statesmen in connection with the Federal Government. Except on the great questions upon which the war hinged, the Confederate leaders were under a strong bias in favor of sound principles and good government, and for pretty much the same reasons that impel men to strict and austere morality. They wished to conciliate public opinion in favor of a revolution of doubtful propriety, by introducing such reforms as would meet the good sense of intelligent men without any elaborate argument. The Southern leaders were so bent on securing independence, protecting slavery, and establishing the right of secession, that they were unwilling to aid those objects by the prompt adoption of such reforms as the experience of seventy years showed could be introduced with advantage into that Federal Constitution which they made the basis of their own.

There was one subject on which there was no room for difference of opinion among enlightened observers of the operation of the Federal Government. The practice adopted by all the then recent American Presidents of using their power during their first term as an instrument for securing a second, made it impossible that any man who had served in the public councils should overlook either the existence of this evil, or its magnitude, or its dangerous tendency, when they set themselves to inquire what beneficial changes could be made in a Constitution which was, in the main, excellent. The Confederates, therefore, undertook to remedy this particular evil, and they acted like wise men in using, not their own invention, but the results of other men's reflections. A great many of the most sagacious statesmen of the country had at various times earnestly recommended a change in the Federal Constitution making the President ineligible for a second term. The Southern leaders, instead of extemporizing a new crocheted, borrowed a sound idea which had committed itself to the mature judgment of so many able statesmen, and which was, moreover, so obviously self-recommending, that its adoption was not likely to disappoint expectation. The Confederate constitution accordingly contained this provision:—"The President and Vice-President shall hold their offices for the term of six years; but the President shall not be reeligible." If the American people were wise enough to introduce this amendment into the Federal Constitution, it would cut up by the roots one of the worst abuses of our political system. The Federal patronage could never again be perverted into the instrument of one man's ambition.

But even this change would not reach the whole extent of the evil. If the President were a strong partisan, he might use the Government patronage for the advantage of his party, although he could not employ it for his own. But the motives for abuse would be comparatively weak. As the President himself would retire from politics at the close of his term, and could receive no personal benefit from the success of his party, party spirit would not be reinforced by purely selfish motives; and in cases where a man's partisan feelings happened to be so torpid and negative as those of General Grant, we might be almost exempt from a prostitution of the patronage. But, in most cases, the President would be an active partisan, and would use the patronage for the advantage of his party. On this point we have, indeed, but little light from experience, Mr. Lincoln being the only President re-elected since Jackson, and Lincoln did not live to wield the patronage of his second term in favor of a Republican successor.

The Confederate Constitution had another provision which was unquestionably wise, although it bore a faint superficial resemblance to the Tenure-of-Office act. But it differed from it fundamentally. It was in these words:—"The principal officers in each of the executive departments, and all persons connected with the diplomatic service, may be removed from office at the pleasure of the President. All other civil officers of the executive departments may be removed at any time, by the President or other appointing power, when their services are unnecessary, or for dishonesty, incapacity, inefficiency, misconduct, or neglect of duty; and when so removed, the removal shall be reported to the Senate, together with the reasons therefor."

The fundamental difference between this wholesome provision and the Tenure-of-Office act, lies in the circumstance that the action of the President was complete and absolute, requiring no sanction by the Senate, and permitting no restoration of the officer. True, the President was required to report his reasons; but his action was nevertheless final. He was furnished with a rule to guide his conduct, but his responsibility was neither impaired nor shielded. He was the sole judge of the infidelity of the cause of removal, although he could not remove without cause, nor for causes which were merely political or personal. The removed officer could never be reinstated; but if the President violated the Constitution, or abused his authority, he was responsible both to public opinion and to the impeaching power for such abuses, his report of his reasons furnishing a basis of inquiry into his conduct. We should be glad to see this provision transplanted into the Federal Constitution, and do not doubt that it and the intelligibility of the President for a second term would remedy the abuses of the Government patronage which threaten to subvert our institutions.

The Public Credit.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

At last we see daylight ahead! Congress stamps out the greenback heresy; Grant hastens to make this the first law to receive his signature; and now Secretary Boutwell announces that he has plenty of money, that the receipts from imports are increasing, and that he means to use at least a part of his large surplus in buying up and cancelling Government bonds. A better word has not been spoken for the public credit since Grant's inaugural. For months and years we have been aimlessly paying interest on from sixty to a hundred millions of debt that might as easily as not have been bought up at the current rates, and the gold wherewith to do it lay all the while idle in the vaults of the Treasury. The quadruple folly of this procedure cost us the interest on debt that might have been stopped, the interest on money kept idle that we wasted, the profit we might have made by buying in our bonds at their current selling rates, and the immense impetus we might have given the public credit by showing that the bonds were actually getting scarcer, and that we were making haste to reduce the volume of our debt. Now at last we have a Secretary who comprehends that Government business, just like that of individuals, should be managed to the best advantage on business principles.

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